News and Views of Farmers

AT TEN CENTS A BUSHEL.

Sweet Potatoes Grown at Small Cost —Lack of Attention Cause of Failure.

(Roanoke-Chowan Times.)

A very important crop, and one that is generally neglected, is the sweet potato. It grows to perfection in this part of the State and can be raised at a cost of ten cents a bushel, yet but few farmers have them even for their own tables more than three months in the year. The sweet potato patch is generally neglected until the cotton and peanut crops—the money crops of this section—have received more or less careful attention and then it is often too late to make a crop of potatoes.

That sweet potatoes of the best varieties (the yams) can be grown for ten cents a bushel or even less was proven by a farmer in the vicinity of Rich Square the past year.

Below we give the result of the experiment on one acre of land:

Rent of one acre	$10.00
Fertilizer and manure	5.00
Potato plantings	6.00
Labor	15.00
Total cost, one acre	$36.00

Yield of the acre, 400 bushels of as fine potatoes as were ever grown in this section. The varieties planted were Norton and White Yams. The Norton yams, a very fine, sweet, juicy variety, the kind most highly prized on the farms, perhaps made the best yield.

In the above estimate of cost every item is put at the highest figure. Rent of the land is placed at ten dollars per acre, when the usual price is five dollars per acre.

Mode of Cultivation.

The land was medium light sandy soil on which peanuts were planted the year before. The land was not as well prepared as it should have been. Hogs had been allowed to run on and root it all winter. About the middle of March the rows were run off four feet apart, (without breaking the land, which could have made it better) and a small quantity of hog-pen manure put in the drill on about half of the acre and stable manure on the other half, and covered by throwing a light furrow on it. The land remained in this condition until the latter part of May when the plants were ready to set out. A cotton plow with moulds off was then run in the furrow and the manure turned up and the ground loosened. A low grade fertilizer at the rate of 200 pounds per acre was put in the drill and the land bedded with a one-horse plow. The rows were dragged off to make them flat on top and the plants set out when the land was in the right order. A few days later, after a light rain, a man with a potato digger (a light iron tooth rake) went over and loss-end the dirt between the potato plants. About two weeks later, after another rain, they were gone over again, this time with a small hoe, and the ground loosened between the plants again. To do this work it required the time of one man less than a day each time. The only other work or cultivation they received was when the vines began to run, and from one to two feet long, they were turned and cultivated one time with a cotton plow with the long sweeps on, three furrows to the row. About half of the patch was "sided" with the cotton plow and the middles thrown out with a turn plow, two furrows to the middle. This plowing or cultivation, as any farmer knows, required the services of one man and a mule less than a day. This was all the work or cultivation the potatoes received. So it will be seen that all the expenses from the time of planting to housing time was less than three dollars. In this connection it should be stated that geese had the run of the field until about the middle of July when they began to interfere with the peanuts in the same field and had to be taken out.

On the 28th of August two rows of the potatoes were dug and measured and it was found the yield was at the rate of 228 bushels per acre. When housed the latter part of October the yield was 400 bushels per acre.

How Kept Through the Winter.

The great difficulty with the successful growing of sweet potatoes is keeping them from rotting during the winter, but this difficulty is easily overcome. The potatoes from the acre above described have kept almost perfect. Most potatoes rot on account of being kept too warm. This lot was housed under shelters and in hills made out in the open, but boarded up to keep the cold winds off. The land was slightly elevated by throwing up a little dirt and pine straw placed on this. The potatoes were then placed carefully on this elevation, (about six inches), and while being placed in the hill air-slacked rock lime was thrown over them occasionally, perhaps a half bushel of lime to 50 bushel of potatoes. They were then covered with pine straw to a depth of about six inches except at the top which was left open until cold weather. When it turned cold more straw was put on but no dirt was used. At this writing, March 8th, the potatoes on which the lime was used are in perfect condition. A few on which no lime was used began to rot and were disposed of. At one time, when it seemed we were going to have a severe cold spell some paper and old sacks were thrown over them, but taken off as soon as the weather moderated.

Land for potatoes should be well drained. The farmer who made 400 bushels to the acre mentioned above, made a failure the year before by fertilizing too highly, and planting on land not thoroughly drained, and so located that it did not get the benefit of the sunshine all day. It has also been found that the land has an effect on the flavor of the potato, as well as on its keeping qualities. Last year potatoes grown on a black sandy soil, though well drained, were not as sweet as those grown on high, light colored, sandy soil in the same field.

The year 1908 may have been exceptionally favorable to the growth of sweet potatoes, but if so, in ordinary seasons there is a profit in growing potatoes.

SHEEP ON THE HILL LANDS.

Certain Breeds Are Especially Adapted to Rough Country—How to Raise Them.

(By Professor J. J. Hooper, Kentucky Experiment Station.)

The number of sheep in the United States is decreasing, while the consumption of mutton is increasing and as a result we find sheep commanding a high price. It is not at all improbable that these high prices will continue for a long number of years.

Farmers now understand that there is money in sheep and they are inquiring how they can best start a flock.

Every farmer who has any grazing land can profitably raise some sheep. Hilly pasture land is in abundance in many sections—hills that have not been cleared of their timber; and there are millions of acres of such land which will afford good browsing for sheep or Angora goats.

For hilly lands I can recommend any of the Down breeds—Southdown and Shropshires. The Leicesters or Lincolns would probably do well in the level, fertile sections.

My advice is not to engage in the sheep business at all unless you can give the sheep the care and attention which they demand. They will not thrive unless they are looked after carefully.

As a general rule, when properly managed, they can subsist on land that will not support larger domestic animals. They eat nearly all of the weeds.

I do not pretend to be able to say

First Prize Shropshire, Illinois State Fair.

just how the farmer can start a flock of sheep in the most economical manner, as this will depend upon the location of the farm and the available supply of stock ewes in the locality.

As a general rule, if it is possible to secure the foundation flock near home that would be preferred to buying them at a distance.

In selecting and buying ewes be very careful not to get disease. Watch for scab. They should always be dipped before leaving their old yards, and if possible dipped again on reaching the new home. Look for ewes that show good breeding.

Old eyes, such as are not desired by the butchers, can frequently be purchased at a very reasonable price, can be economically carried over the winter, and after lambing time in the spring the ycan be culled out and the poorest ones fattened and sold.

Every flock of sheep should be looked over very carefully each spring and no poor ones left in it.

The ewes should all be fed well just before breeding and should have sufficient food at all times. Old country shepherds claim that by "flushing," allowing them free run of succulent pasture, just before and during the breeding season, the ewes will produce a larger number of twins.

The selection of the ram to head one's flock is a very important matter. By all means pick out a good, vigorous, pure-bred one.

In a grade flock the pure-bred ram exerts at least half, and probably more than half, of influence on the lambs that e gets. Select a ram that is low-set, deep in body, wide of back and heavily muscled over all parts, especially in the leg of mutton, the highest price in the whole body.

Examine the fleece carefully. Secure a ram that it well wooled over the belly, as this will insure against colds and pneumonia when the sheep have to lie on cold or damp ground.

As a general rule the production of market sheep will bring in as great a profit as the rearing of fancy stock. Sheep will thrive on most of the foods produced on the average farm.

A good mixture to supplement pasture is ten pounds of cornmeal, ten pounds of bran and two pounds of oil-meal.

Corn makes an excellent fattening food. Alfalfa makes an excellent pasture, and the same is true of clover, but care must be taken to prevent bloat when first pastured.

The hay from these pastures, forage crops, is excellent for sheep.

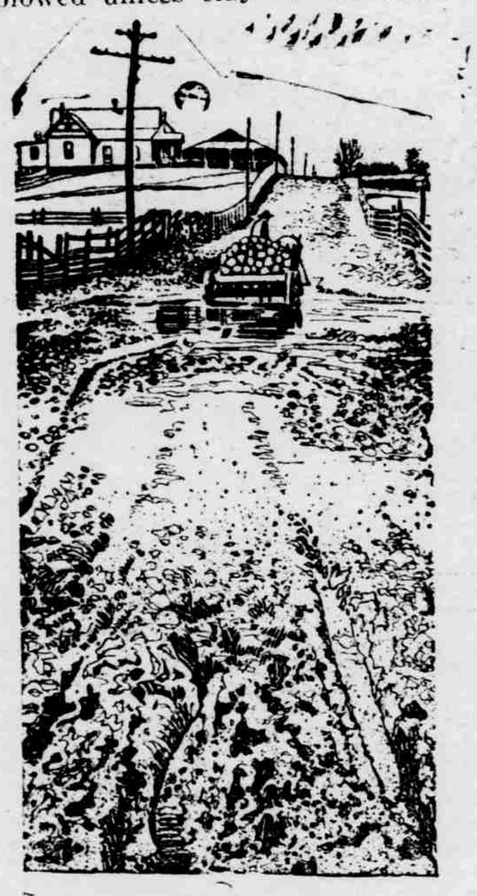
BETTER ROADS NECESSARY.

Bad Roads a Serious Objection to Living on a Farm—Good Ones Easy to Make.

The persistent and powerful enemies of dirt roads are water and narrow tires, and the constant effort of the men in charge of the roads should be to guard against their destructive effects and remedy all damage as qickly as possible.

With a sandy soil and a subsoil of clay or clay and gravel deep plowing so as to raise and mix the clay with the surface soil and sand will prove beneficial.

The combination forms a sand-clay road at a trifling expense. On the other hand, if the road be entirely of sand a mistake will be made if it is plowed unless clay can be added.



A Country Road in Missouri in March.

Such plowing would merely deepen the sand, and at the same time break up the small amount of hard surface material which may have formed.

If the subsoil is clay and the surface scant in sand or gravel, plowing should be plowed over its whole width result in a clay surface rather than one of sand or gravel.

A road foreman must know not only what to plow and what not to plow, but how and when to plow.

If the road is of the kind which according to the above instruction should be plowed over, its whole the best method is to run the first furrow in the middle of the road and work out to the sides, thus forming a crown.

Results from such plowing are greatest in the spring ad early summer.

In ditches a plow can be used to good advantage, but should be followed by a scraper or grader.

To make wide, deep ditches nothing better than an ordinary drag scraper has yet been devised. For hauls under 100 feet, or in making "fills" it is especially serviceable.

It is a mistake, however, to attempt to handle long haul material with this scraper, as the wheel scraper is better adapted to such work.

For hauls of more than 800 feet a wagon should be used.

The machine most generally used in road work is the grader, or road machine. This machine is especially useful in smoothing and crowning the road and in opening ditches.

A clay subsoil under a thin coating of soil should not be disturbed with a grader.

It is also a mistake to use a grader indiscriminately and to pull material from ditches upon sand-clay road.

Not infrequently turf, soil and silt from ditch bottoms are piled in the middle of the road in a ridge, making mudholes a certainty.

It is important in using a grader to avoid building up the road too much at one time. A road gradually built up by frequent use of the grader will last better than if completed at one operation.

The foreman frequently thinks his road must be high in the first instance. He piles up material from ten inches to a foot in depth only to learn, with the arrival of the first that he has furnished the material for as many inches of mud.

All material should be brought up in thin layers, each layer well puddled and firmly packed by roller or traffic before the next is added.

A split log drag should be used to fill in ruts and smooth the road when not too badly washed.

The drag possesses great merit and is so simple in construction and operation that every farmer should have one.

In regions having fairly dry summers, such as Illinois, heavy improvements and new construction should be done in the spring, while the earth is moist enough to pack well.

Unless a sprinkler and a liberal supply of water are available it is bad practice to disturb the earth roads materially during the summer or fall after they have become compacted by dry weather and traffic.

Dry earth will not pack readily but grinds into dust under traffic in dry weather, while in wet it quickly turns to mud.

Garden Planting Hints.

Make out your lists for seeds and plants early.

The azaleas bloom late in winter. Plant sweet peas; trim roses.

Turn plants frequently to keep from being "drawn."

Be ready for the cold days—they are still at hand.

Too much fertilizer develops a weak but rapid growth.

Plants that are not growing need no fertilizers.

Do not shower plants on cloudy days, and keep out of sun when wet.

Take no chances in fighting insects, fight to exterminate.

Keep window garden clean. Remove dead leaves, scrub pots, shower foliage, keep window glass clean.

Paste paper over all cracks and openings of windows containing plants. Tighten loose panes with putty.

Large pots for foliage, small pots for flowers. Plenty of sunshine for geraniums.

Amaryills and Queen lily should be brought into light the last of March for May blooming.

If soil in the bulb pot in the cellar seems dry moisten moderately, but don't keep wet, or the bulb will rot.

A POPULAR BREED.

Leghorns, if compelled to roost in cold houses and pick a living from the slush of a barnyard, will not lay. But when warmly housed and properly fed

Single Comb Brown Leghorn Cock.

they are the best of winter layers.

The best bred Leghorns are practically non-sitters, and should not be counted on to rear their young. For those who are so situated that they can hatch and rear their pullets artificially, or with hens of other breeds an dwho give their hens suitable care in winter, the Leghorn will prove a very profitable breed for the farm.

Two years ago a stock publication of Des Moines, Iowa, offered a prize of $1,000 for an ear of corn on which there were fifteen rows of fully developed kernels. C. E. Eiley, of Chillicothe, Mo., is said to have raised such an ear.

In 1907 Indiana's wheat area was placed at 2,391,748 acres. Last year the acreage was 2,059,615.